

Letter from Richard O. Johnson to Alexander Graham Bell, February 14, 1903

Osis Feb 18 State of Indiana. Institution for the Education of the Deaf. Established 1844. Address All Communications to Richard O. Johnson, Superintendent. Dictated Indianapolis , February 14, 1903. Dr. A. Graham Bell, Washington, D. C. My Dear Dr. Bell:

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Last spring, 1902, a series of anonymous and threatening letters containing charges against the Board of Trustees, the Superintendent, the principal, and others, was sent to the Governor and various other persons, all letters and charges being signed "Indiana Deaf Association", the only address given being "General Delivery" post-office, Indianapolis. Every effort was made to discover the anonymous author but without avail.

In June, 1902, one Moses Clinton, a hearing-speaking man, who was serving as Boys' Supervisor, was discharged by me for nefarious conduct within and without the Institution. Later, he confessed to being the anonymous author of the spring. He was actuated by personal spite and dissatisfaction with his wage.

One of his charges and the principal one relied upon by him was that this Institution has deteriorated under my management, that it ranks only as a third or fourth rate school, that I am without standing in the profession and ridiculed by other Superintendents, that the Association Board of Directors and the Executive Committee of the Conference of Superintendents and Principals are composed of the "sticks" and "deadheads" of the profession, etc., etc., ad nauseam.

It is proper to add that the deaf have nothing to do with the matter excepting poor Kerney whom I refused to employ as a teacher and who later committed suicide. While Clinton was employed here, he sent letters purporting to come from the said "Indiana Deaf

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Association” to himself and brought them to my office for my inspection saying he had no idea whence they came and that the deaf were trying to cause trouble, etc., etc.

At last, we have brought the matter to a head and will have the Board of State Charities investigate the affair. Now, you are cognizant of the affairs of this school when I was appointed Superintendent in 1889 after five years service in a subordinate position. You know of its present condition either through report or personal inspection and its progress during intervening years. You know my personal standing among members of the profession and at conventions and what is thought generally of the school and my work. If you will write concerning these matters, addressing your letter to the Secretary of the Board of State Charities and send to me so that I may present them on Thursday, February 19, I will appreciate this act of justice and friendship more than I can express in words. The time is short I know but hope you can give it immediate attention.

Very sincerely, Your Friend. Richard O. Johnson